

VOICE PLACING AND TRAINING EXERCISES

A complete and carefully graded Series of Progressive Exercises for the Production and Cultivation of the Singing Voice

by

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BREATHING AND BREATH CONTROL

The exercises which follow have been taken from *The Control of the Breath* (Dodds and Lickley), which is published by the Oxford University Press. Students who wish for a full description (with numerous illustrations) of the mechanism of respiration and its action, are directed to this volume, in which will also be found a number of exercises for securing facility in every application of breath control, both in singing and speaking.

The majority of students who present themselves for instruction are found to have poor chest expansion at the front and sides of the waist. The expansion of the upper part of the chest is usually better, and in many cases quite good. Both sexes suffer from the same deficiency, and although in women it is usually more evident than in men, the difference between the sexes is not nearly so marked as in the days of the tight-laced corset, and the (now happily) old-fashioned wasp 'waist. The student must in the first place obtain experience in expansion of the lower part of the chest.

EXERCISES FOR SECURING THE CORRECT METHOD OF BREATHING

EXERCISE ONE

This should be practised in bed with the body clothed in loose attire so that the movements are unhampered. Lie flat on the back with the head slightly raised by a pillow. Place one hand on the front of the body at the waist-line. Now breathe naturally in and out quietly through the nose, without trying to follow any particular method. You will find that the hand is being gently moved up and down by the respiratory actions. After you are quite sure of this fact, place one hand on each side of the body at the waist level, as if placing the arms 'akimbo'. Notice the side expansion that is produced by the action of the breathing mechanism. Then place one hand in front as before, keeping the other on the side: observe that you get the expansion simultaneously at the two places. Do not overwork the mechanism at first by too violent breathing, gentle exercise is quite sufficient to begin with. Practise for two or three minutes in bed when opportunity offers, until you have thoroughly grasped the sensation of using the mechanism of respiration in this manner.

EXERCISE TWO

When quite sure of the correct performance of exercise one, the student may recline on an armchair, with his feet stretched out straight in front, and his head laid back. Place a small cushion so that it gives support to the 'small of the back'. The body should now be in a posture similar to that of lying in bed, save for the angle to the floor. The ordinary clothes, however, are now worn, so that the conditions demand more control than those of the previous exercise. Breathe slowly through the nose, and endeavour to secure the exact result which was achieved when practising exercise one. This is a greater step forward for women than for men, and may take them a little longer to master satisfactorily, because of their corsets and waist-belts.

EXERCISE THREE

Exercises one and two will not permit the student to take a complete inspiration; the recumbent position of the body does not allow the movement of the ribs to be more than partial. If, however, the exercises have been successfully accomplished, the student may now endeavour to breathe correctly while in a standing position. Stand against a wall or door, with heels, shoulder blades, and the back of the head all touching it. Place one hand as before in the centre of the waist in front, and try to obtain the same result as in the previous exercises. Do not take too much breath, especially at first. See that your method is correct, and leave quantity alone. Practise quietly until certain of your ability to control the mechanism of inspiration.

EXERCISE FOUR

Step away from the wall or door, and endeavour to keep the body in the same posture. Now practise quietly, always inhaling through the nose, and aim to breathe exactly as in the previous exercises.

EXERCISE FIVE

Inspire as in exercises three and four, to expand at the waist; when this is accomplished, continue the inspiration until the upper part of the chest has also expanded. The shoulders must not move, nor must the abdomen be drawn in: the inspiration must cease before the latter occurs. The result will be a complete inspiration. Practise this gently and silently for two or three minutes whenever opportunity offers, not only in the house but also in the street, train or 'bus. Make it your persistent endeavour to establish a habit of always breathing in this way. Of course the inspiration need not invariably be very deep; at home, when doing breathing practice, take full, complete inspirations, but at other times they may quite well be partial inspirations of the same type.

EXERCISES FOR STRENGTHENING THE BREATHING MUSCLES, AND FOR TEACHING CONSCIOUS CONTROL

For the Muscles of Inspiration

EXERCISE SIX

Take a full inspiration, hold the breath for ten seconds, then allow it to escape quietly. Do this several times.

EXERCISE SEVEN

When walking along the street, inspire gently for six steps: retain the breath for twelve further steps, then allow it to escape quietly. Practise at intervals.

For the Muscles of Expiration

EXERCISE EIGHT

Take a full inspiration, hold it for five seconds, and then blow it out smartly through the mouth, as though blowing out a candle held about two feet from the face. Practise every morning before clothing yourself. To begin with, do this exercise four times, afterwards gradually increasing the number of respirations to eight. Do not, however, increase the number past eight, but rather increase the force of the expiratory blow.

EXERCISE NINE

Take a moderately full inspiration. Sing softly any note about the middle of the compass of the voice (G will suit the majority of voices). Hold this steadily and softly for twelve seconds. Increase the length of the note as muscular strength and control improve, but remember that the note must be steady, no quivering or breath trembling must be apparent in the tone.

EXERCISE TEN

Practise as in the previous exercise, but gently swell and afterwards diminish the note; the control of the tone must be consciously at the front of the waist. This exercise will form a link with future singing practice, and serve as an introduction to the valuable messa di voce.

VOWEL-SOUNDS

Throughout the exercises which follow in Parts One, Two and Three, pronounce the vowel-sounds thus:

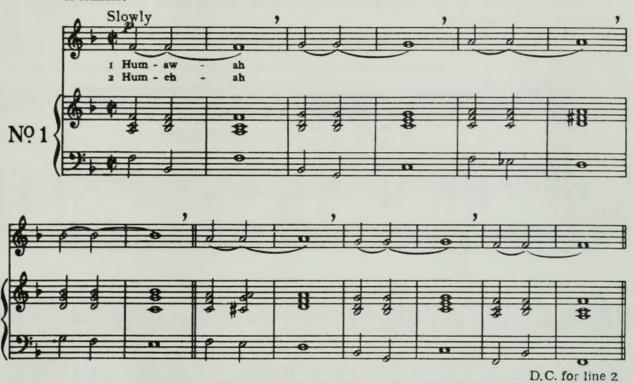
AH as in Bar
EH ,, Bet
EE ,, Bee
AW ,, Ball
OO ,, Boon

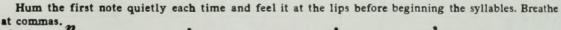
Part I

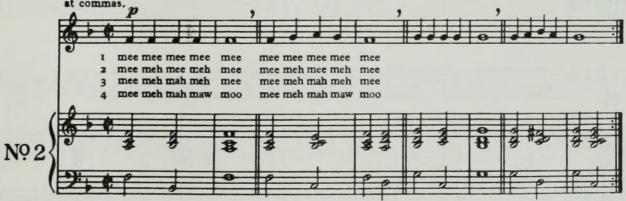
LOWER MEDIUM NOTES

First Step. Voice Placing Exercises for Leose Throat, Forward Tone and Resonance.

Begin with Hum, (Hm) which must be felt at the lips. Continue the same on to the vowels. Breathe at commas.







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Second Step.

Tongue Loosening Exercise.

Practise with a mirror.

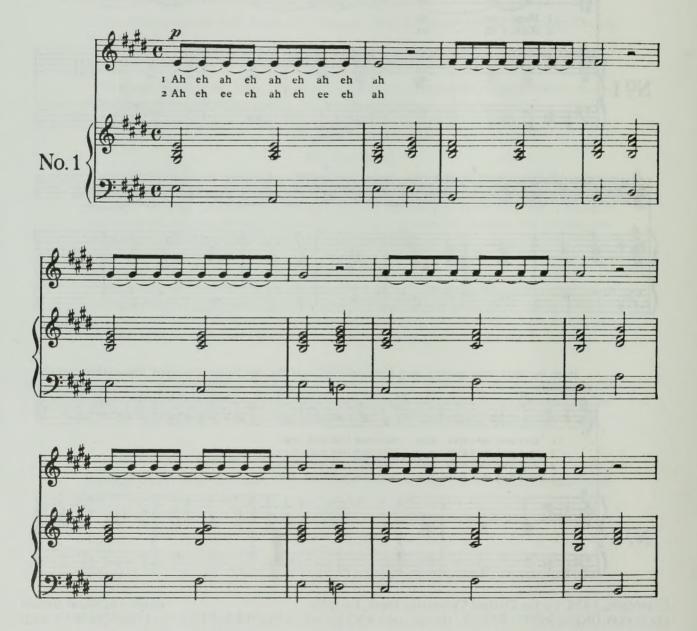
Keep lower jaw quite still, but not stiff.

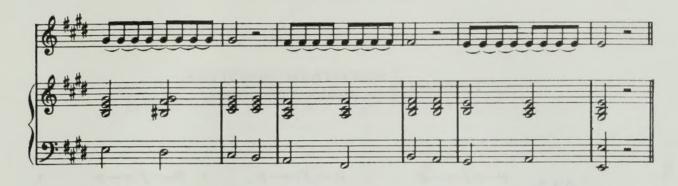
If necessary, hold chin at first to keep it still.

The vowel changes must be made by tongue movement alone.

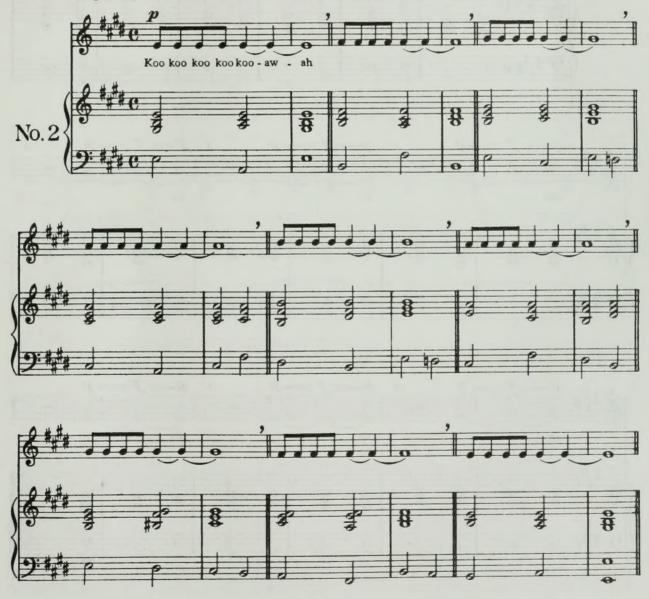
Open mouth moderately, place tip of tongue behind lower teeth, the tip must not be pressing, but only touching the teeth or gums, and while the rest of the tongue performs the exercise, the tip never moves from its position.

Slowly at first, quicker when more proficient.

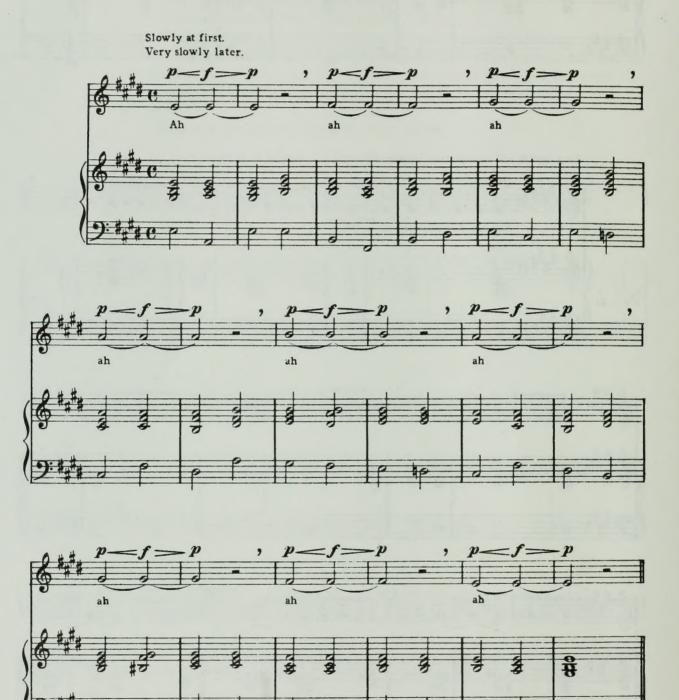




Sing lightly and feel the tone forward throughout. Breathe at commas.

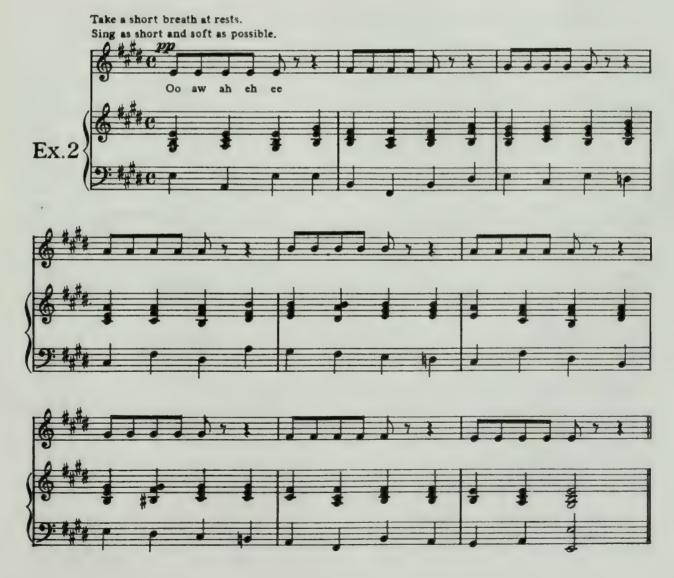


Third Step. { Sustained Notes (messa di voce) For Breath and Tone control.



Fourth Step. Attack.



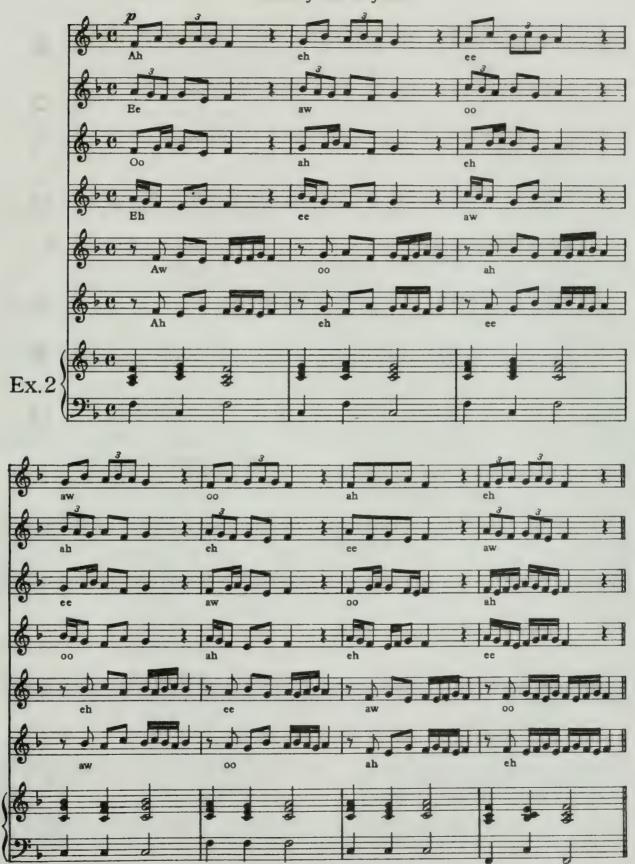


Fifth Step. Flexibility.

Sing with loose forward tone, distinct notes without jerk; and increase the speed as proficiency is gained.

Breathe at rests. 00 eh Eh ee aw 8 ah eh 00 ee eh ah 00 ee 끂 8 -0

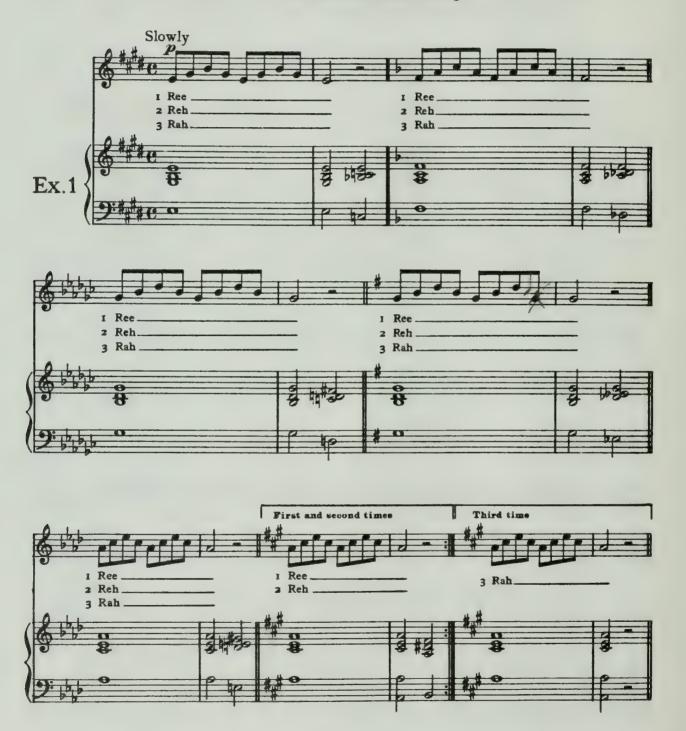
SOPRANO AND TENOR. Flexibility and Rhythm.

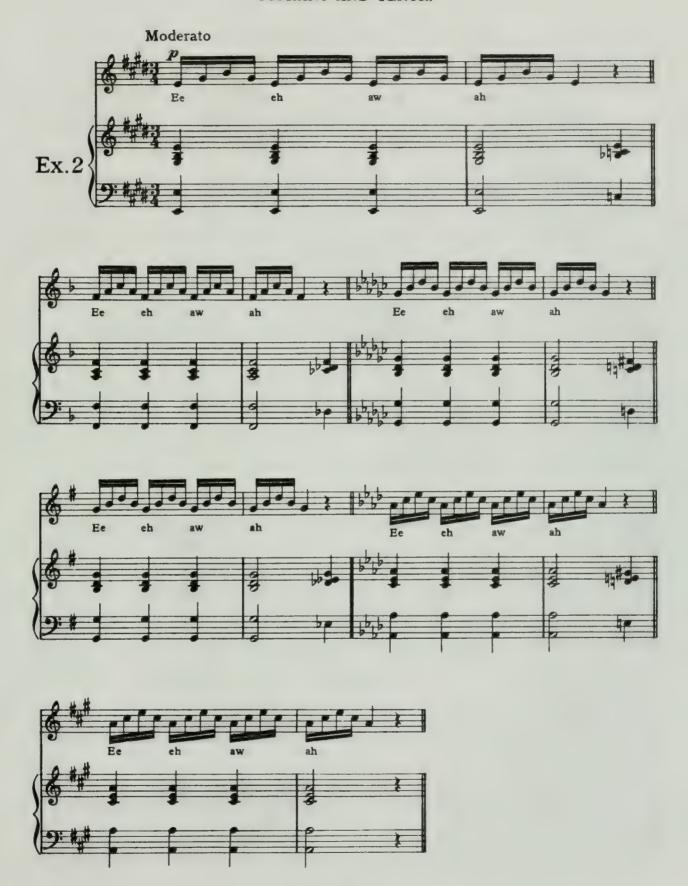


Part II

LOWER MEDIUM AND UPPER MEDIUM NOTES

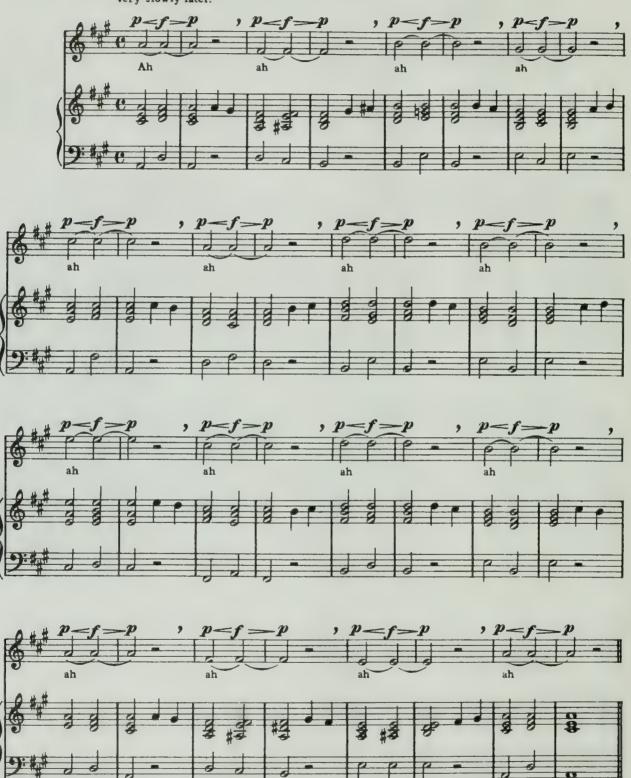
First Step. Voice Placing Exercises for Transition from Mouth to Head Placing.



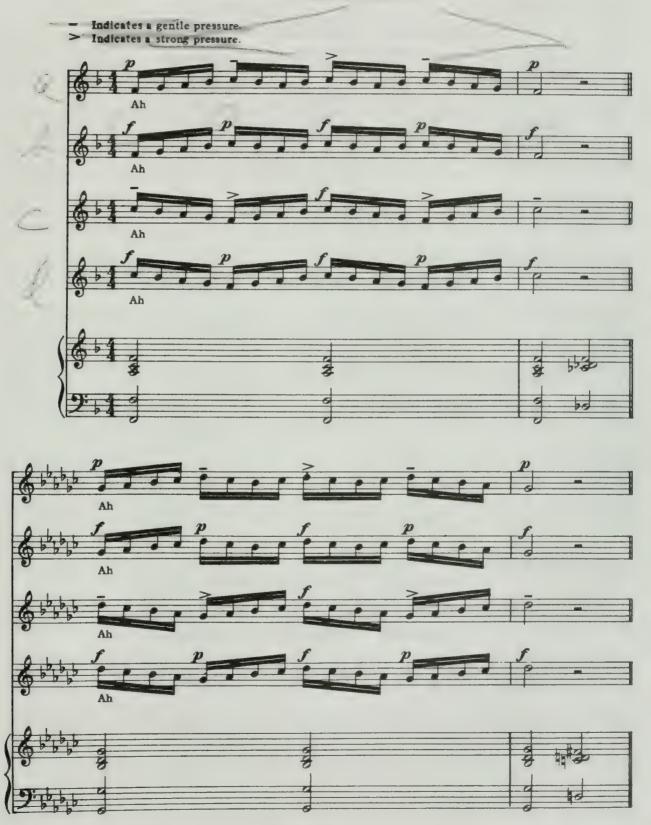


Second Step. Sustained Notes (messa di voce)

Slowly at first. Very slowly later.

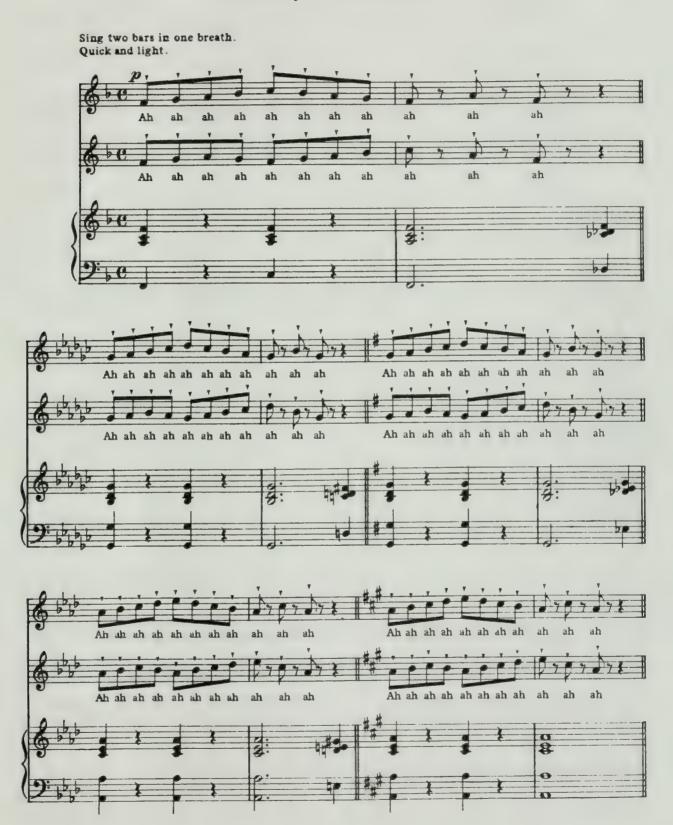


Third Step. Breath Pressure Variations.

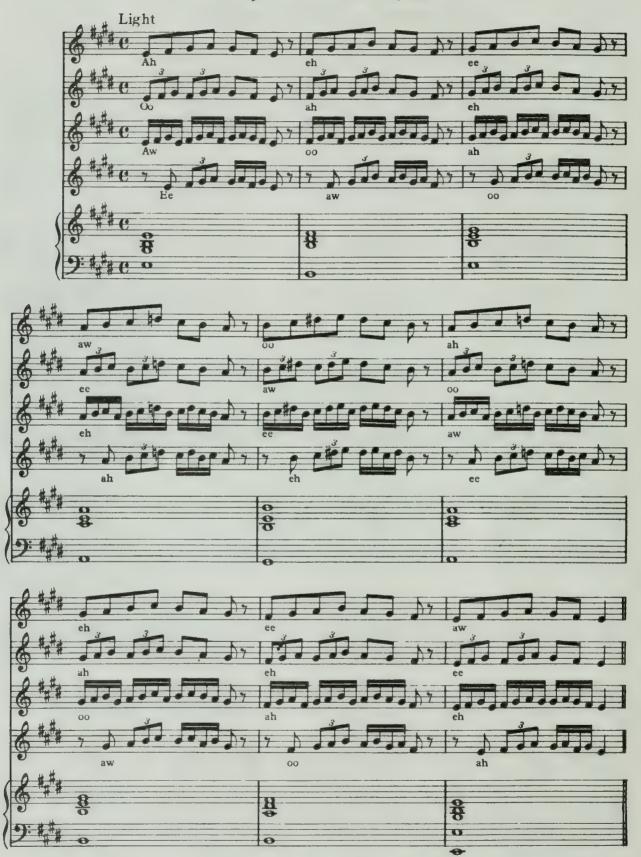




Fourth Step. Attack and Staccato.



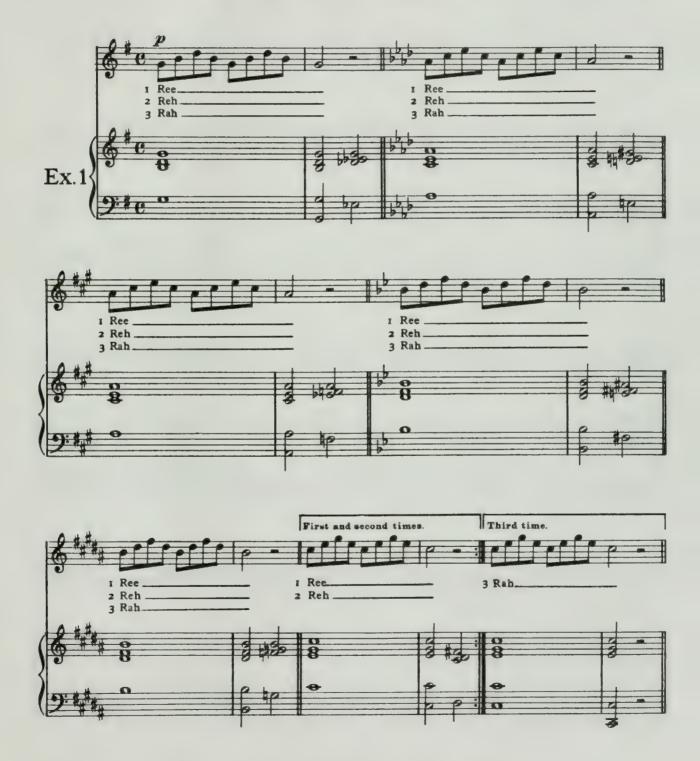
Fifth Step. Flexibility and Rhythm.



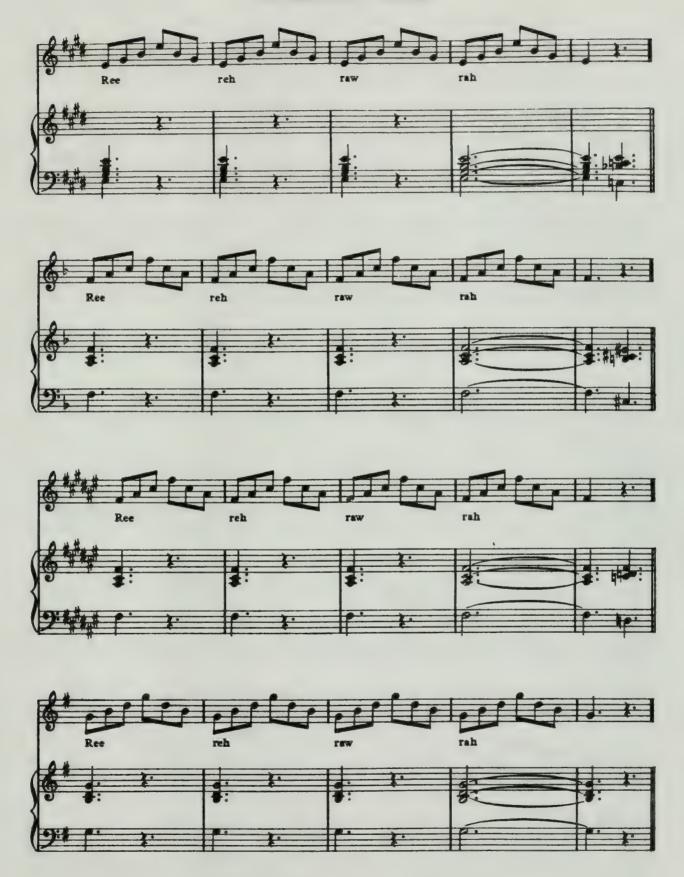
Part III

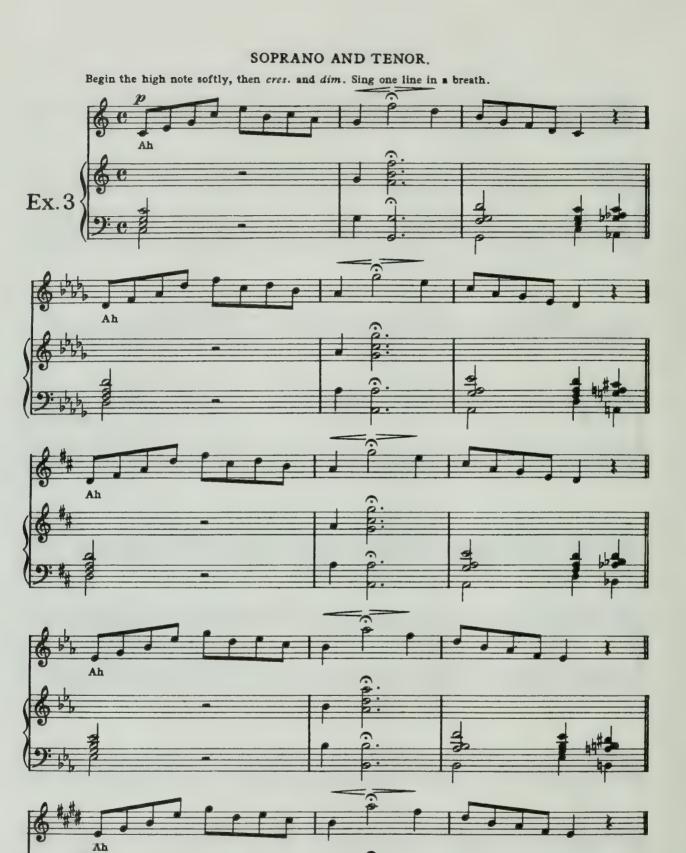
THE WHOLE RANGE OF THE VOICE

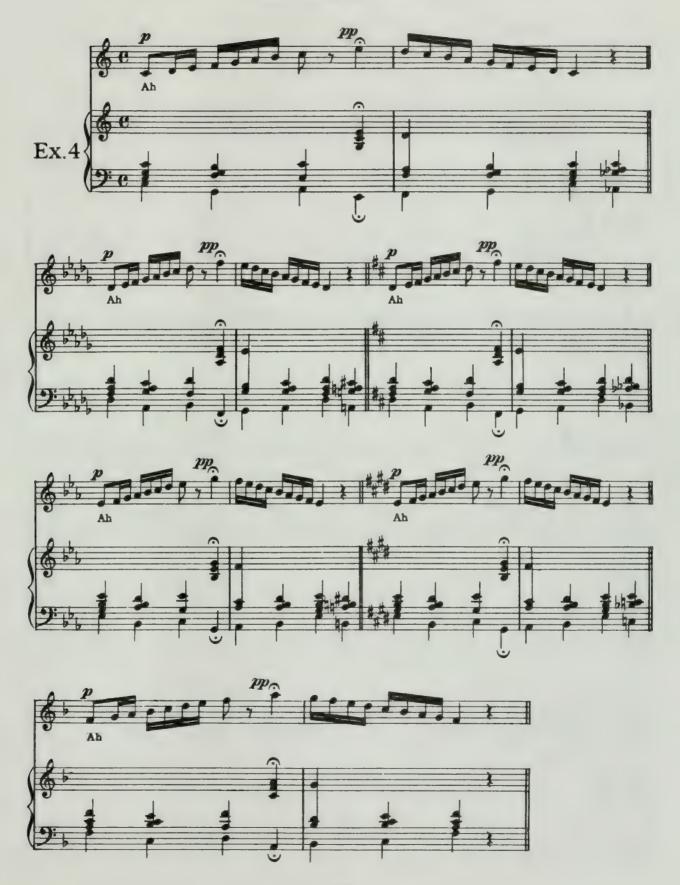
First Step. Voice Placing Exercises.







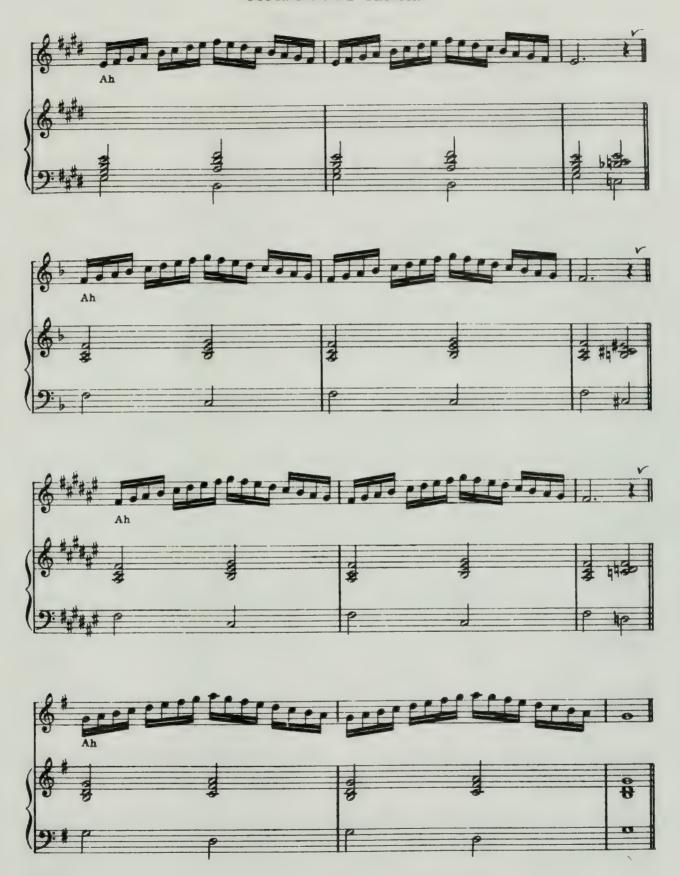




Second Step. Flexibility.

Major Scales.





Arpeggi and Scales.

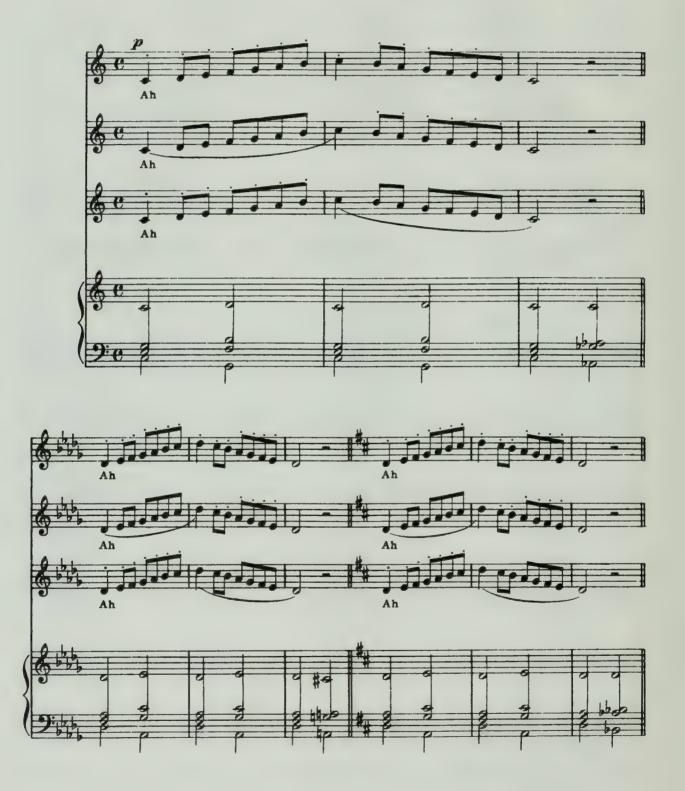


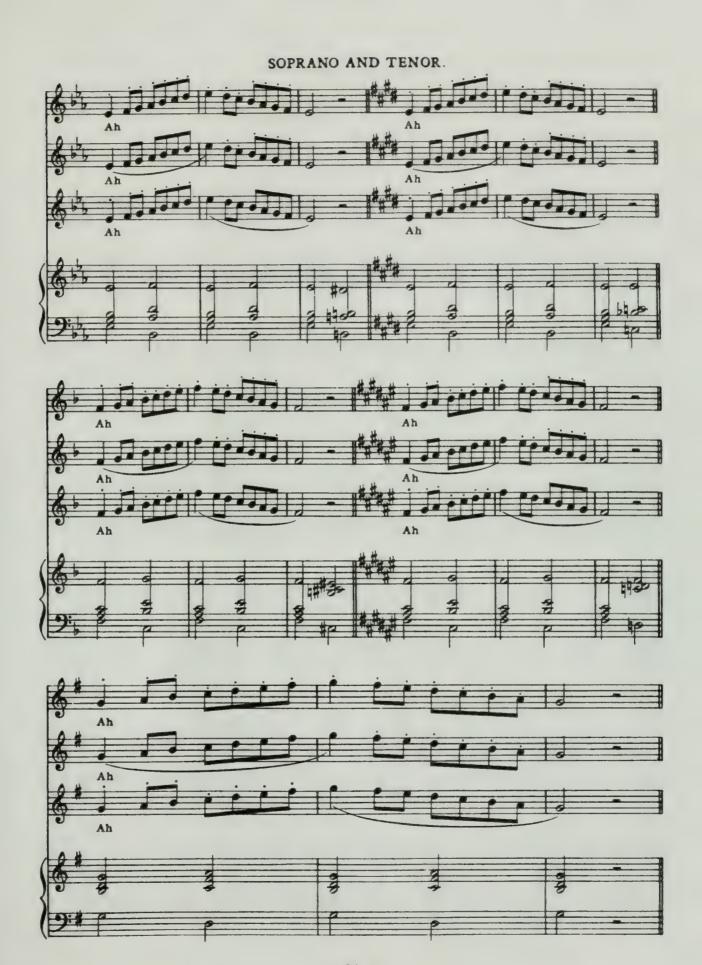
Arpeggi.

Practise (a) soft, (b) cres. and dim. (c) dim. and cres.



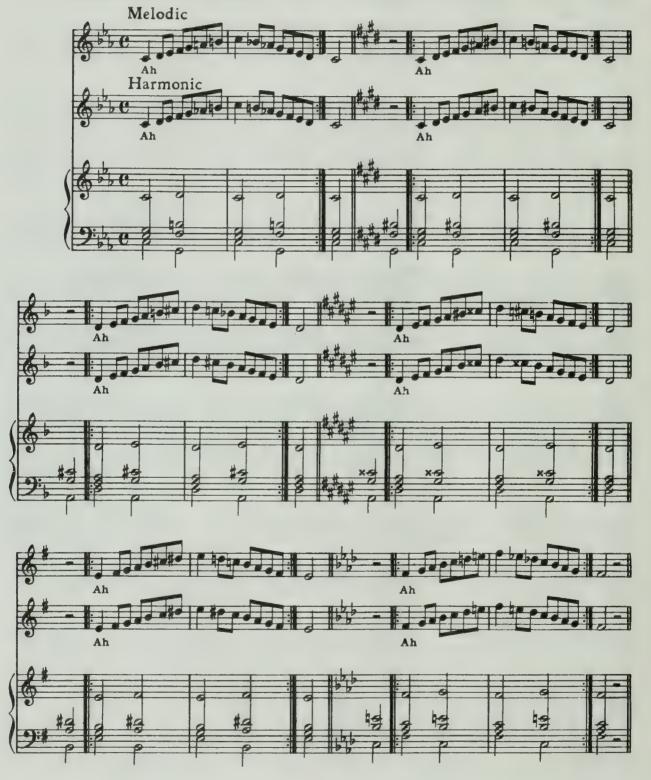
Third Step. Attack, staccato and legato.





Fourth Step. Minor Scales.

Sing each scale twice in a breath.



Fifth Step. | Breath Pressure Variations (Combining Range, Flexibility and Breath Control).

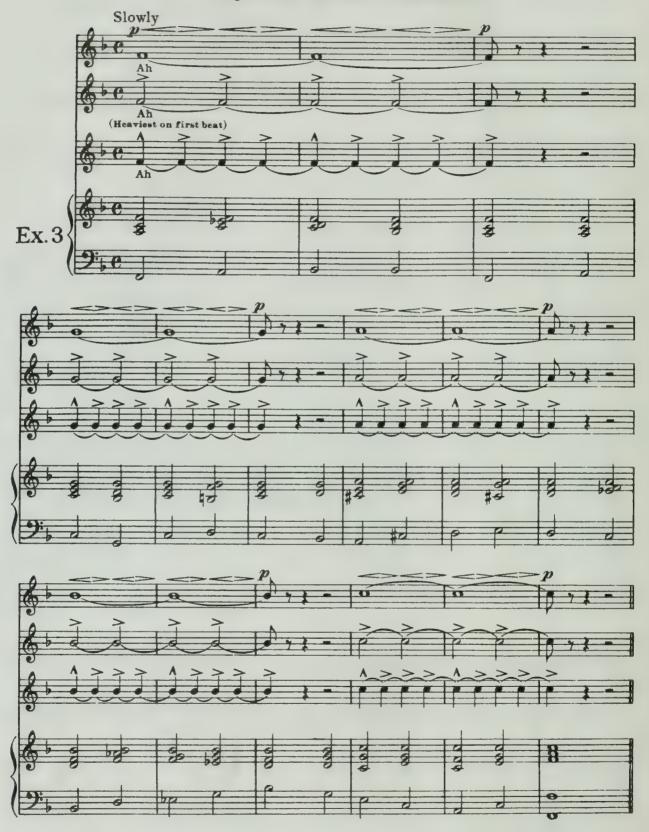
A slight pressure on the first note of each group.







Single Notes with Pressure Variations.



This exercise may be practised in higher keys if desired.

Sixth Step. {Range Extension and Ear Training. Extended Scales.



Chromatic Studies and Flexibility.





PART FOUR

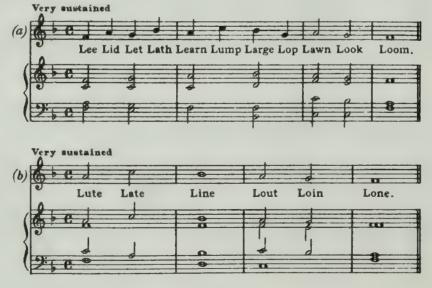
VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

The number of simple or single vowel-sounds in the English language is eleven: all of these can be (spoken and) sung in the front of the mouth, and it is advisable to practise a succession of vowel-sounds, with or without consonants, to standardize the forward placing of words in (speaking or) singing.

In addition to the simple sounds there are six compound vowel-sounds or diphthongs, which should be similarly practised. The columns of words which follow contain these vowel-sounds.

Single Vowels								
I	EE	as in	Bee	Mee	Lee	Need	Deed	Geese
2	I	,,	Bid	Mid	Lid	Nip	Did	Guilt
3	E	,,	Bet	Met	Let	Net	Debt	Get
4	A))	Back	Mat	Lath	Nap	Damp	Gag
5	ER	22	Berg	Merge	Learn	Nerve	Dirge	Girt
6	U	>>	But	Mud	Lump	Numb	Dull	Gull
7	AH	,,	Bar	Mar	Large	Nard	Dart	Garb
8	0	>>	Box	Mop	Lop	Not	Dock	Got
9	AW	,,	Ball	Morn	Lawn	Nor	Door	Gore
10	00	>>	Book	_	Look	Nook	_	Good
II	00	"	Boon	Moon	Loom	Noon	Do	Goose
Diphthongs								
12	U	(EE-OO) as in	Bugle	Mule	Lute	Nude	Duty	Gewgaw
13	A	(EH-EE) "	Bake	Mate	Late	Nay	Date	Game
14	I	(AH-EE) ,,	Bide	Mine	Line	Nine	Died	Guide
15	OU ((AH-OO) ,,	Bout	Mouth	Lout	Now	Doubt	Gown
16	OI ((AW-EE) ,,	Boil	Moil	Loin	Noise	Doiley	Goitre
17	0 ((OH-OO) "	Bone	Mote	Lone	Note	Dote	Gold

The various vowel-sounds should first be spoken, and deliberately placed at the front of the mouth. Then each column of words may be practised on one continuous note (F or G) as in intoning. The pupil could then with advantage sing them to a melodic phrase, as the following:



Consonants

The following is a classified table of consonantal sounds in English. They can with advantage be practised alone and also spoken and sung (a) as initial consonants, followed by various vowel-sounds; (b) as final consonants, preceded by various vowel-sounds:

TYPE OF CONSONANT	BREATHED	VOCALIZED	RESONANT
LABIALS (lip consonants)	P Wh	B W	М
LABIO DENTALS (lip and teeth consonants)	F	v	
LINGUO-DENTALS (tongue and teeth consonants)	S Th	Z Th	
LINGUO-PALATALS (tongue and palate consonants)	T K Ch Sh	D G J Zh Y L	N
LARYNGEAL	Н	R	Ng

Double consonants may be practised in speech and singing by using the following list of words:

Up past	Dumb brute	Some more
If felt	I've vowed	Eyes smile
His zeal	With thee	Don't tell
Good day	Take care	Big game
Each chap	Large jar	Push sharp
Will live	In next	Purest star

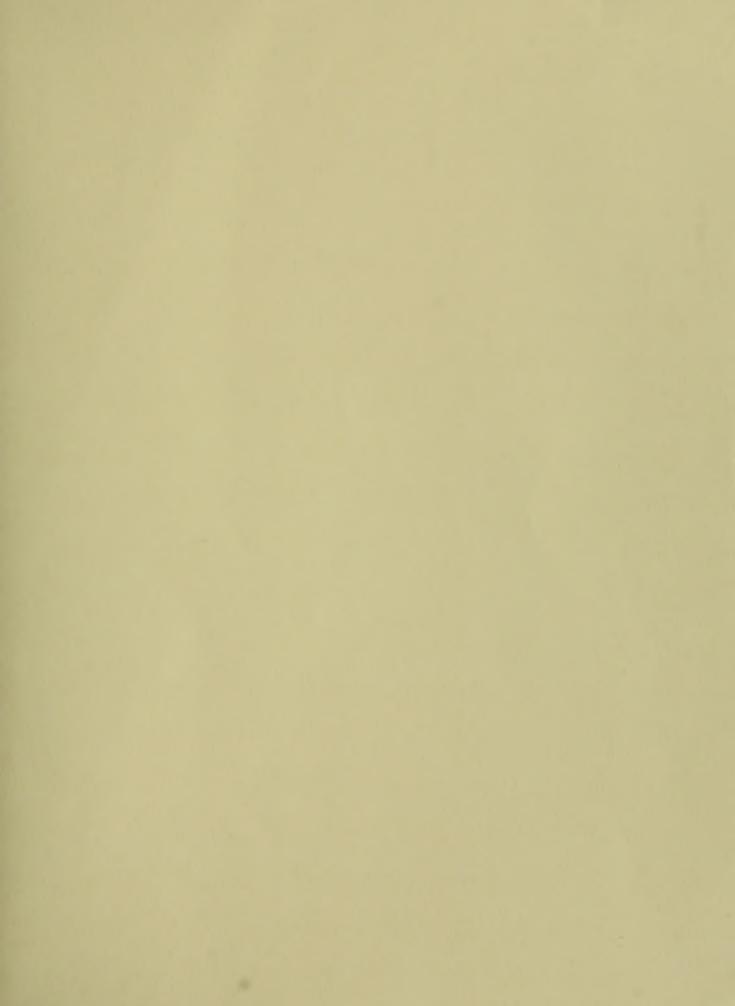
Breath Pressure Variations

In practice for clear enunciation the following or similar phrases will be found helpful: Distinguish between the following:

In next	and	In ecstasy
A nymph	,,	An imp
Attend	,,	At end
Offend		Off end
Assoil	12	As oil
Askew	22	Ask you
A nice house	22	An ice house
The cuckoo sings		The cook who sing

In each group of words, the breath pressure in the first will be placed on a consonant, and in the second on a vowel.

Example: in the first group the accent falls on the consonant N of 'next', and in the opposite group on the vowel E of 'ecstasy'





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